Borde's Goretober 2025

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Borde’s Goretober 2025

by AllAborde (Bordementions)

Summary

This is my first attempt at goretober, 31 days of semi consistent posting for various gore related prompts of various medias/series

I’ll be using the prompt list from @xxanemia on twitter which can be found here

https://x.com/xxanemia/status/1962306160410894835?s=46

Notes

Feixiao under the effects if moon rage finds her next target

I don’t play hsr so chill on me if it’s ooc

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1: Feixiao | Cuts and Scratches

The air was practically red, the sanguine thick enough to choke on, a foul cocktail of vaporized blood, smoke residue from conflict, and the cloying stench of entrails baking in the planet's sickly twilight.

You couldn't tell where the mud ended and the gore began. The ground, once firm soil and strange, spongy flora, was now a churned, sucking mire of crimson and black, greedily clinging to your battered greaves. Every breath was a war in your lungs, a ragged, searing pull against the crushing weight of exhaustion that threatened to drag you down into the muck and drown you in the filth of the fallen.

Everything about you was no less agonizing. Your left pauldron was gone, sheared clean off, and the deep lacerations beneath it wept a steady, warm flow of your own blood down your arm, the slickness a nauseating counterpoint to the drying, crusting viscera of others that painted your skin.

A gash across your thigh throbbed with a furious agitation, a brutal souvenir from some Borisin's claws you'd barely managed to evade. Every muscle fiber screamed, trembling from hours of unending combat. You rested on one knee, your sword point driven into the bloody earth, the hilt the only thing keeping you upright. Your head hung, globs of sweat and filth dripping from your chin, your vision swimming with dark spots.

Victory. That is what it was, this is what the result of it had been.

Corpses littered the landscape like errant pollution. The elegant forms of your fellow comrades, their armor breached and their bodies ruined, lay twisted beside the monstrous carcasses of the Denizens of Abundance. Some young Foxian you'd shared a drink with just last night was ten feet away, his torso a gaping cavity from which organs had spilled into the mud. A furry body thoroughly full of matted blood and dirt beside him, its limbs splayed at impossible angles, head a pulped ruin. The sheer scale of the slaughter was an obscenity, a testament to the terrible price of holding the line.

A wet, percussive thump followed by a gurgling shriek drew your gaze upward.

Feixiao.

Your general. Your friend. The woman who could drink a battalion under the table and greet the dawn with a laugh that could shatter mountains. But the figure dominating the battlefield now bore only a physical resemblance to that person. She was for all intents and purposes the hunt itself, a primal, terrifying force of nature. Her white trench coat was a memory, now dyed a uniform, dripping crimson, torn in so many places it resembled a spiderweb. Blood clung to her hair, matting the white and teal strands into dark, heavy clumps. It streamed down her face, but you could still see the ecstatic, feral snarl plastered across her features, her long, pointed canines bared to the foul air.

The last dregs of the enemy forces were trying to flee, a pathetic, stumbling rout. They were no longer fighting, only trying to survive. It made no difference to her. She moved with a speed that defied her immense size, a blur of motion that seemed to teleport her from one victim to the next. Her battle axe, a weapon that would take two people to even use practically, was being swung around like a weightless extension of her arms.

You watched, mesmerized and horrified, as she ran down some hulking, vaguely humanoid creature. They turned to lash out with some kind of weapon, a desperate final act of survival. Feixiao didn't even bother to block. She sidestepped as gracefully as the conditions could allow, her free hand lashing out to seize the person by their armor. There was a sound like wood splintering under immense pressure as she tore some appendage clean from their body. They let out a gurgling, high-pitched scream, and in the next instant, her axe came around in a whistling, horizontal arc.

The impact was absolute. The Denizen's torso practically exploded in a wet detonation of blood and splintered bone, the two halves of its body flying in opposite directions. Feixiao was bathed in the fresh torrent, and she made no effort to move out of the way, a guttural roar of pure, unadulterated ecstasy tearing from her throat. It was the sound of a predator reveling in a kill.

She didn't pause. Her head snapped toward another fleeing enemy, her teal eyes, burning with a light that seemed to come from some deep, bottomless wellspring within her, locking onto the new target. This was the Moon Rage. You'd seen it before, of course. It was what made her the Merlin's Claw, the unstoppable spearhead of the Yaoqing. It was terrifying.

But even as she charged after the last few stragglers, her movements

never deviated from the animalistic craze. There was usually a point where the frenzy subsided, where the general you knew re-emerged from the bloody haze. But as she cleaved another body from shoulder to hip, the two halves sliding apart in a cascade of organs, you saw no sign of that happening. She was only descending deeper into the madness, soon to be huntress without a hunt.

Eventually though that was that, a last paralyzed, thrashing creature, made it no more than a couple feet before Feixiao was upon it. She didn't even use her axe. Her left hand, drenched through, shot out and clamped around its thin neck. You heard the distinct, wet crack of its spine snapping even from fifty yards away. She held it aloft for a moment, its limbs twitching in a final, pathetic dance, before discarding the corpse with the casual disinterest of someone tossing away a piece of trash.

And then, silence.

The sudden absence of sound was more jarring than the cacophony of battle had been. The screams, the roars, the clash of steel and the wet tearing of flesh—all of it was gone, replaced by a low, mournful wind that whispered over the field of dead. The only sound was the heavy, ragged panting of your general as she stood motionless in the center of the carnage she had wrought. Her broad, powerful shoulders rose and fell with each desperate gulp of air. She stood there for a long moment, a towering, crimson-soaked statue, her head slowly turning as she scanned the horizon.

There was nothing left to kill. No movement, no life, save for the few wounded Cloud Knights groaning amongst the dead, and you.

Her gaze swept past mangled heaps of friend and foe alike, methodical, searching. Then, it stopped. It locked onto you. Even from this distance, you felt the intensity of it like a physical touch, a cold spike of pressure suddenly beaming into your head.

Slowly, she began to walk toward you. Her right hand still gripped the haft of her axe, but she let the massive, triple-bladed head fall to the ground, dragging it behind her. The sound was monstrous. The sharpened steel carved a furrow in the bloody earth, scraping against stone, catching on armor plates, and slicing through the soft flesh of the dead with a wet, ripping noise that turned your stomach.

You pushed yourself up a little, forcing a weak, shaky smile onto your face. Your throat was dry, and your voice came out as a rough croak,

but you called out to her, trying to inject the usual easy camaraderie into your tone.

"Gods, Feixiao... you certainly don't half ass things, do you?" you managed, your words punctuated by a pained gasp for air. "That was... crazy. If you keep that up, you're going to give all the new recruits a complex. They'll never want to get on your bad side."

She didn't answer. Her pace didn't falter. She just kept coming, her heavy boots sinking into the muck with each steady, relentless step. The dragging axe was the only reply, a gruesome percussion marking her approach. The initial sliver of fear in your gut began to twist into a heavy knot of dread. This wasn't right. Even at her most frenzied, she always had a word, a sharp grin, something.

She came to a halt directly in front of you, looming over your kneeling form like a blood-slicked mountain. You had to crane your head back to see her face, and what you saw made the air freeze in your lungs.

She was a wreck. Deep cuts crisscrossed her arms and torso, some so wide you could see the dark muscle tissue beneath. A thin line of blood trickled from a gash high on her cheekbone, carving a clean path through the layers of filth and gore. Her chest heaved, each breath a deep, shuddering sound, like a great beast on the verge of collapse. And her eyes… They were wide, frantic, the teal irises blazing with that same terrifying, inhuman light. They darted all over your body, from your face to your wounded leg, to the sword still clutched in your hand. It wasn't a look of recognition, hardly, it was just… assessing.

Terror.

"F-feixiao?" you whispered, your earlier bravado completely gone, replaced by trembling confusion. "Hey... talk to me. The fight's over. We won."

Her eyes finally settled on yours. For a heartbeat, you thought you saw a flicker of something, a spark of the woman you knew. But it was gone in an instant, replaced by a deepening of her snarl. Her knuckles, wrapped around the axe handle, went white.

It happened faster than thought. Faster than you could possibly track. One moment, the axe head was resting in the mud behind her. The next, it was a blur of motion, tearing up from the ground in a devastating upward swing aimed directly at your head.

Barely saved by anything less than pure instinct, there was no time to think, no time to plan. Your own sword, a flimsy thing compared to her weapon, shot up on its own accord. You threw all of your remaining strength into the block, bracing your body for the impact.

The sound was a deafening CLANG of protesting metal, a shriek of steel that vibrated through your very bones. But it was the force behind it that was truly unbelievable. It was like trying to stop a falling meteor. The impact didn't just stop at your blade; it slammed through your arms, your shoulders, your core, and down to your feet. The shockwave of raw, kinetic energy threw you backward, your boots scraping for purchase in the slick mud.

You stumbled, your wounded leg giving out completely, and you landed hard on your back, the air driven from your lungs in a pained exhale. Your sword was ripped from your grasp, sent spinning through the air to land somewhere in the mire.

If you hadn't blocked, your head would now be a red mist painting the ground behind you.

You lay there, gasping, staring up at her silhouette against the bruised purple sky. She stood over you, her axe now held ready in a two-handed grip. A low growl rumbled deep in her chest, a truly bestial sound. And then she spoke, her voice a guttural rasp, unrecognizable and filled with a venomous hatred that was directed squarely at you.

"Filth… of Abundance," she snarled, her words thick with rage. "That is what you are. Not one… not a single one of you can live. Not one will escape this hunt!"

Your words died in your throat, choked off by the sheer, murderous intent radiating from her. Pure unfettered terror jolted through you, an injection of pure adrenaline that overrode the pain and exhaustion. Her arms tensed, and the massive axe rose into the air, blotting out the last of the fading light. It hung there for a second before whistling down in an arc meant to split you clean.

You didn't get to your feet so much as you threw your body sideways, rolling through the bloody slime and over the form of a fallen corpse. The axe slammed into the ground where your chest had been a moment before. The impact was like a cannon blast. The very earth shook, and a geyser of dirt and gore erupted into the air, raining down on you. The blade was buried a good foot deep in the muck.

"Feixiao, for fuck sake, stop!" you screamed, scrambling backward on

your hands and heels, your eyes wide with disbelief. "What the hell are you doing?! It's me!"

She ripped the axe from the earth with a grunt of effort, her muscles bunching powerfully under her skin. She turned, her blazing eyes fixing on you once more. A low, guttural laugh rumbled in her chest, a horrifying, grating sound that held no humor.

"Raise your weapon," she stared, eyes alight in pride. "Raise it and show me what I want to see! Show me that spirit that keeps you alive! Or I will devour you where you lie whimpering in the mud!"

She charged. Her speed was obscene, a seven-and-a-half-foot-tall behemoth covering the distance between you in two long, earth-shaking strides. You barely had time to get your legs under you before she was on you again, the axe swinging in a wide, horizontal sweep aimed at your waist. You ducked under it, the wind from the passing blades ruffling your hair, and felt a sharp sting as the spiked butt end of the haft caught you across the ribs, tearing through your armor's undersuit and ripping a shallow, bloody line across your skin.

You cried out in pain, stumbling, desperately searching for anything to defend yourself with. Your sword was lost. You were defenseless.

"Dull!" she roared, spinning with the momentum of her swing, bringing the axe around for a backhand blow.

You dove forward, pressing yourself against her, the only place you could possibly be safe from the massive weapon's reach. It was like running into a wall of solid muscle and steel. The smell of her was overwhelming—sweat, blood, and musk. Her body was radiating heat like a furnace.

Before you could react, a hand clamped onto your shoulder and she flung you away as if you were a ragdoll. You hit the ground hard, tumbling through the carnage. You came to a stop near a fallen Cloud Knight, in his hands a heavy kite shield of reinforced steel.

A desperate hope surged through you. As Feixiao stalked toward you, her axe held low and ready, you scrambled and grabbed the shield, hauling it up with your wounded left arm. You got one knee under you, bracing the shield's edge in the mud, and prepared for the inevitable.

"Stand up!" she sneered. "Stand up and fight!"

She didn't swing. She lunged, leading with a powerful, straightforward thrust. The central blade of the axe head met the shield with a deafening shriek of tortured metal. But it didn't stop. With her incredible strength behind it, the blade punched through the reinforced steel as if it were parchment.

An agony unlike anything you had ever known exploded in your left arm. The axe blade, having pierced the shield, continued its path, slicing deep into your forearm. You looked down in horror and saw the metal buried in your arm, the shield pinned to your flesh. Blood, shockingly bright against the grime, poured from the wound, streaming down your limb and dripping from your trembling fingertips. You could feel the cold, hard edge of it grinding against your bones.

Feixiao leaned into it, putting her full weight and power behind the axe. The pressure was immense, a hydraulic press of muscle and rage. The blade dug deeper, threatening to sever your arm completely. The shield was being driven into your chest, cracking your ribs, forcing the air from your lungs.

"Break," she grunted, her face a mask of furious effort. "I'll break down every single miserable stain that dares mark itself Abundance!"

Your footing slipped in the slick gore. With a final, desperate surge of will, you let go of the shield, abandoning it and your arm to the axe, and rolled out from under the crushing weight. You landed on your stomach, your mangled arm held protectively to your chest. Feixiao was momentarily occupied, pulling her axe free from the shield that was now effectively stapled to it.

It was your only chance. Your hand clawed at the ground, scooping up a thick handful of the viscous, blood-soaked soil. You surged to your feet and, with a guttural yell, flung the disgusting mixture directly into her face.

It hit her squarely in the eyes. She roared, a sound of shock and fury, staggering back a step and shaking her head violently to clear her vision. That single step was all you needed. Your eyes darted around and found a fallen soldier's dagger, its hilt sticking out of the mud. You snatched it up, lunged forward, and drove the blade deep into the muscle of her right thigh.

The steel sank to the hilt. Her whole body went rigid. A new roar, this one laced with genuine pain, erupted from her. But instead of

collapsing, she seemed to draw power from it. Her free hand shot out and grabbed your wrist, her grip like a vice.

"NNNGAH!" she bellowed, her eyes still squeezed shut.

You dropped the knife and used your free hand to grab the haft of her axe, trying to wrestle it from her grip. It was insane, a fool's errand. Her strength was terrifying. It was like trying to pry a steel girder from its foundation. You were hanging off the weapon, your feet barely on the ground, using every ounce of your being just to keep her from bringing the blades to bear on you.

You were face to face now, your desperate, pain-filled eyes staring into her blind, furious ones.

"Feixiao, please!" you gasped, your voice cracking with tears of pain and desperation. "Listen to me! It's me! C-c'mon I'm your friend!"

For a second, her thrashing stopped. Her grip slackened almost imperceptibly. But then the snarl returned, more feral than ever.

"Enough! Stop talking and fight!" she screamed, thrashing like a cornered animal.

With a final roar of contempt, she did something you never expected. She let go of the axe. The massive weapon fell to the ground with a heavy thud. In the same motion, her now-free right hand joined her left, grabbing you by the front of your battered armor. She lifted you clear off the ground, your legs kicking uselessly in the air.

And then she threw you.

The world became a spinning, chaotic blur. You landed a dozen feet away with a concussive, bone-jarring impact, tumbling end over end until you came to a crumpled stop at the foot of a pile of corpses.

A ragged, violent cough was the first thing that clawed its way out of your throat, bringing with it the coppery taste of blood. For a moment, the world was nothing but a smear of bruised color and a universe of searing, white-hot pain. Every single part of your body was screaming. Your mauled arm felt like it was on fire, a dead, throbbing weight you could barely command. Your ribs groaned with every ragged attempt to draw breath. You tried to push yourself up, but your muscles refused to obey, trembling violently from the slightest movement.

Your gaze fell to your chest, and the breath you were fighting for hitched in your throat. Your armor, where Feixiao had grabbed you, was shredded. The thick leather was torn open as if by a predator's jaws. And beneath, carved deep into your own flesh, was a set of four parallel gashes running diagonally across your chest. They were deep, horrifyingly so. The edges were ragged, and you could see the pale glint of your own breastbone in the deepest part of the wound. Blood, dark and thick, was not just weeping but pumping from the lacerations, soaking what remained of your uniform and pooling in the hollow of your throat.

She had clawed you open. Thrown you like garbage. And now she was coming to finish the job.

Across the small clearing of bodies, Feixiao let out another furious roar. She was clawing at her own face, her long, sharp nails, digging into the skin around her eyes. She scraped and tore with a frantic urgency, gouging bloody furrows into her own cheeks and temples to get the last of the blinding mud out. When she was done, her vision clear, her face was a ruin of self-inflicted wounds, fresh blood mingling with the old, dried gore. Her eyes, now unobscured, found you instantly. They were shot through with red, wild and utterly devoid of reason.

You had to move. You had to get up.

With a strangled cry that was equal parts effort and pain, you forced your body into a standing position. You were swaying, dizzy, a bloody wreck barely clinging to consciousness, but you were on your feet. You had no weapon. No shield. Nothing but your own broken body to stand against the storm that was your general.

She didn't charge this time. She stalked toward you, her movements low and circling, like a wolf closing in on a wounded deer. Her hands were held open at her sides, her fingers flexed, those lethal claws now plain to see.

"Feixiao... don't," you pleaded, your voice a pathetic, gurgling whisper. You took a stumbling step back. "Please... just look at me. I-I'm an ally… It's okay… it's over…"

"Friend?" The word was a disbelieving snarl, spit from between bared fangs. "I bear no friendship for a Denizen of the Abundance. You are prey, that is your role in the hunt. I will enjoy tearing you to pieces for it."

She lunged. You brought your arms up, a pathetic attempt to ward her off. She crashed into you, and the one-sided brawl began. You threw a desperate punch, your fist connecting with the side of her jaw. You felt the cartilage of her nose give slightly under a wild haymaker. Dark blood streamed from her nostrils, dripping from her chin. But that was the extent of your strength.

She only laughed. seemingly excited by the prospect. She turned back to you, a fresh stream of crimson painting a horrifying smile on her face, her eyes alight with an ecstatic, murderous glee.

"Yes! That's it! Fight! Struggle! I know you're capable of it!"

Her fists were like hammers. A blow to your already-cracked ribs sent a burst of pain through your side, and you felt something give with a soft crunch. A backhand to your head sent your vision scattering into a thousand tiny, glittering shards. You tried to reason with her through the haze of pain, your words slurring and desperate.

"Fei… it's…"

"QUIET! All you make is meaningless noise to save your own skin!" she roared, grabbing your flailing right arm.

She drove a knee into your stomach, doubling you over, and then she got her other hand on you, her fingers digging into the torn flesh of your chest.

She held you fast, your feet dangling inches above the ground, your struggles utterly useless against her monstrous strength. She brought her face close to yours, panting, a thin line of spittle and blood drooling from the corner of her cut lip. She looked at you, at your terror, and then she looked down at her own hand, splayed across your bleeding chest.

And she dragged her claws downward.

A scream of pure, unadulterated anguish was ripped from your soul as her nails, sharp as razors, tore through skin and muscle. The sound of your own flesh ripping was loud even for how soft it was. She wasn't just scratching. She was carving you. She raked her claws down your stomach, opening you up in four more deep, parallel lines, a grotesque mirror of the wounds on your chest. Blood poured from you, covering her hands, her arms, her front.

You beat your fists against her shoulders, her chest, your blows having

no effect. Tears streamed down your face, mingling with the blood and grime.

"PLEASE! STOP! IT HURTS! FEIXIAO, IT'S ME!" you shrieked, your voice breaking into raw, incoherent sobs.

She ignored your pleas, lost in her method. She released your chest and grabbed your good arm, holding it out. You watched in a haze of horror as she slowly, dragged her claws from your bicep down to your wrist. The cuts were deep, plowing furrows through your arm, laying the muscle bare. You could feel every millimeter of the tearing, every fiber of your being screaming in protest.

"I will purge you," she grunted between ragged breaths, her voice a low, obsessive mantra. "I will scrape the taint of Abundance from corner of this universe, until not a single one remains."

She dropped you. You collapsed into the mud in a heap, mauled and convulsing, barely recognizable. You were crying, choking on your own blood, the world fading to a dark tunnel. You could feel the life draining out of you, pouring from a dozen grievous wounds into the blood-soaked soil. Through the dimming haze, you saw her stand over you, her bloody hands flexing, her head tilted like a curious predator.

The last of your strength was gone, your frantic struggles fading into weak, involuntary twitches. Through the haze, you saw her descend. She didn't just kneel; she collapsed onto you, her massive frame coming down with a force that drove the last of the air from your lungs in a wet, bloody wheeze.

Her weight was suffocating. The heat rolling off her body was intense, a furnace fueled by her rage, and it mingled with the slick, hot wetness of the blood that coated you both. She was panting, her deep, ragged breaths gusting against your cheek, each exhalation a cloud of foul, hot air.

She lowered her head, her face hovering just inches from yours. Her bloody, scratched features were pulled into a mask of intense, animalistic concentration. She looked you over, her blazing eyes darting back and forth, not seeing a person, but a canvas of flesh, a puzzle of meat and bone she was intent on solving. A low growl rumbled in her chest as she took in the ruin she had made of you.

Then her claws began to move again.

It wasn't the frantic tearing from before. This was slower, more

deliberate, almost exploratory. Her left hand settled on your already-shredded stomach, and her claws sank into the wounds, hooking into the muscle beneath. You let out a thin, gurgling scream as she dragged them sideways, widening the gashes, pulling and tearing with a sickening, wet ripping sound. She seemed fascinated by it, by the way your flesh parted under her touch, by the fresh surge of dark blood that welled up to meet her fingers.

You thrashed beneath her, a final, futile burst of panicked energy. "No... no, please... Fei..." you sobbed, the name barely coherent on your lips. "Stop... hurts..."

Your pathetic struggles only seemed to excite her more. The feral, blood-streaked smile on her face widened, and a sound that was half-gasp, half-laugh escaped her lips. It was sadism, a joyous cruelty that lit up her eyes as she watched you writhe and cry, pinned and helpless beneath her.

A single, perfect tear welled in the corner of her right eye. It traced a clean path through the blood and grime on her cheek, followed by another, and then another. Tears were streaming down her face, falling from her chin to splash onto your own blood-soaked skin. Yet the rabid smile never wavered. Her body was still reveling in the kill, drunk on the carnage, not until the hunt was finished.

"Almost... clean..." she whispered, her voice just as excited, but reserved choked by some kind of tremor underneath.

She shifted her weight, and then her arms were wrapping around you. For a delirious moment, you thought it was an embrace of comfort, an apology. But it was just another instrument of your destruction. She pulled you tight against her massive, sweaty, bloody chest, holding you in a crushing hug that squeezed the last vestiges of air from your lungs.

And as she held you there, her claws, which were pressed against your back, sank in.

You screamed, a long, final, piercing shriek as her nails, tore through the tough leather of your back armor. They punched through skin and muscle with terrifying ease, and you felt them grate against your ribs. She grunted, a sound of supreme effort and ecstasy, and pushed deeper.

There was a series of sharp, wet pops as your ribs broke under the pressure. Her claws hooked around them, and then she pulled.

The world dissolved into a singular, all-consuming torment. You felt your insides being ripped apart. Your back arched, your body convulsing uncontrollably in her murderous embrace as she tore her hands through your torso, shredding organs, severing arteries. A hot, final torrent of blood erupted from your mouth, covering her neck and chest. You felt your lungs collapse, your heart rupture.

Your last sensation was of being held tight by your dearest friend, your body being torn to shreds from the inside out, your dying eyes fixed on her beautiful, terrifying face—a face that was smiling in triumph. The hunt was over.

Chapter 2: Ryoshu | Consensual Gore

Chapter Summary

Ryoshu and the reader engage in some very particular activities together

Chapter Notes

Please enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The first thing you're aware of is the pull. The familiar, insistent tugging of the smooth, red weave of the ropes digging into the skin of your wrists and ankles. They are tied above your head, your arms stretched taut, bound together and anchored to a heavy metal ring bolted into the wall of the room.

Your legs too are spread, knees bent slightly, each ankle lashed to a similar anchor point near the floor. Thoroughly stretched and prepared like a canvas, laid out on the heavy, blood-darkened tarp that protects the floorboards from the oncoming deluge.

Cigarette smoke. It smells. Your blood. It slicks your skin, making the cool air of the room feel frigid as it washes over you. Yet your gaze belongs to one thing only, no matter the hazy cocktail of pain and adrenaline, it focuses on the artist at work.

She straddles your hips, her weight is not heavy, if only grounding. A cigarette hangs from the corner of her lips, a thin ribbon of smoke curling up to wreath her black hair. Her sharp, red eyes are narrowed, not with anger, but with the focus of appraisal for her medium.

In her gloved hand, she holds a small, sharp blade, its edge gleaming under the dim light of the room. She isn't hacking or slashing; she is painting.

The knife traces a slow, agonizing path down the side of your torso. Even if the press is light the scratch is anything but shallow. You can feel the distinct sensation of the blade parting your skin, gliding through the thin layer of fat, and teasing against the muscle beneath. A fresh blooming of crimson erupts in its wake, hot, overflowing the channel she's carved to trickle down your side and pool on the tarp.

A small gasp escapes your lips, your entire body arching against the ropes in an involuntary spasm. The pain is immense and your body screams , straining against their bonds.

Ryoshu pauses. She doesn't look up at your face. Her gaze remains fixed on your shuddering torso, where her line was just beginning to waver. "…H.S." she says, the two letters between a puff of smoke-laced air.

The tip of her blade, which had lifted a bare millimeter, presses down again. Harder this time. It sinks deeper into the end of the cut, a brutal punctuation mark to her earlier sangria. A whimper is all you can manage as the pain intensifies tenfold, radiating through your entire being. You bite down hard on your lip, tasting your own blood in your mouth, and force your body into a trembling quiescence.

Satisfied, she withdraws the blade slightly, returning to the previous pressure. "Better," she mutters, more to herself than to you. She continues the line, extending it in a graceful curve around your hip bone. "An artist cannot work on a quaking easel."

You watch, mesmerized as she works. Another line begins on your thigh, mirroring the one on your torso. She cuts with an unnerving steadiness, her free hand sometimes bracing against your skin, her touch impersonal and firm. Blood flows in rivulets now, a webwork of red that decorates your skin more than the cuts themselves. The tarp beneath you is soaked.

"Is it… what you imagined?" you manage to rasp out, your voice hoarse.

Ryoshu stops and finally lifts her eyes to meet yours. For a moment, there's nothing but the sound of your breathing, she takes a drag from her cigarette, the cherry flaring brightly in the gloom.

"I.I.I.I.," she says, exhaling a plume of smoke. Imagination Is Inherently Imperfect. "The medium is all that dictates the form. Your skin, it takes the blade well. Soft." She leans in closer, her red eyes scanning the bloody patterns she's etched into you. She reaches out with her free hand, dipping a finger into a pool of blood on your abdomen and smearing it, as if testing the viscosity."

Her words are so detached, that a shudder wracks your frame that has nothing to do with the pain. This is what it was to be truly seen by her. Not as a person, not as a fellow Sinner, but as a perfect, living slab of marble waiting for the chisel.

She moves to your chest next, the tip of the knife resting just above your sternum. You can feel the slight tremor in her hand, not of uncertainty, but of anticipation. Excitement.

“C.U.T.E,” she whispers, the sound a low in your ear. The blade presses down. Your entire body tenses, every muscle screaming for you to flee, but the ropes hold you fast.

You suck in a sharp breath, and Ryoshu waits, her patience absolute, until you exhale in a long, shuddering sigh.

There is no quickness to it, no mercy in speed. This is a methodical painting, one that must take time. The knife's journey begins, a slow, deep drag from your collarbones down to the soft flesh of your solar plexus. It's a pain beyond anything the shallower cuts could offer. You feel the blade grate slowly against the bone of your sternum, a horrifying, vibrating sensation that seems to echo in your teeth as it’s unable to pass through.

Your back arches high, a futile attempt to escape the unescapable. A barely restrained scream sounds from your mouth, but it does little to deter her.

“H.A.R.D,” she states, her voice a low murmur against your screams. She sets the small knife aside and picks up a heavier tool from her tray —a short, single-edged cleaver, honed to a razor sharpness. She positions its tip in the groove she’s already carved. “You’re gonna feel a little pinch.”

With a grunt of effort, she brings the heel of her free hand down on the cleaver’s spine. The sound is sickening—a wet, percussive crunch that reverberates through your entire skeleton. The pain is blinding, a supernova behind your eyes that whites out your vision. She repeats the motion, again and again, working her way down your chest. Each impact is a fresh wave of torture, your body convulsing in the ropes, the bindings cutting deeply into your skin.

Finally, with a last, splintering crack, the bone gives way. Ryoshu discards the cleaver and uses her hands, her fingers hooking under the edges of your ribs and pulling your chest open like a set of gruesome double doors.

The sight is surreal. The air, suddenly frigid, hits organs that have never known anything but the dark, wet warmth of your own body. You can see it all. Your own heart, pulsing with a frantic, terrified rhythm, pumping out blood that spills into the rapidly filling cavity.

Your lungs, pink and spongy, expanding and contracting with each ragged, wet gasp you take. The glistening, membranous sac encasing your heart, the dark, solid mass of your liver just visible below the diaphragm. It's beautiful.

It's

You

Ryoshu leans over, her face now inches from the opening, her eyes alight with a fire that borders on holy. A splatter of your arterial blood has marked her cheek like a brushstroke, but she doesn't notice. She is utterly captivated.

"You're beautiful like this," she breathes, the word a reverent whisper. "Doesn't take an artist." She reaches a hand into the gaping wound, her fingers gently closing around your beating heart. You cry out as the pressure sends your pulse into a dizzying flutter. "The movement… the texture. So much more honest than without."

Her other hand goes to your left, lifting your arm. She examines it, turning it over before focusing on your hand. She retrieves the smaller knife. "M.O.R.E," she declares, and begins to cut into your palm.

You watch in a detached haze of shock as she meticulously slices the skin away, exposing the pale, corded tendons beneath. With the tip of her blade, she plucks at one, and you see your index finger curl into a fist, independent of your will. She severs it. The finger goes limp. She repeats the process, tendon by tendon, until they cut loose like a marionette. Blood pours from the ruin of your hand, dripping onto the tarp with a steady, pattering rhythm.

"Heh, looks like it hurts," she muses, dropping the flayed hand. She looks at your arm, then at the rest of the tableau. Her eyes narrow critically. "Too much on the left."

She stands, grabbing a small, serrated saw. She returns to your left side, grabbing your arm just below the shoulder. Before you can even process her intent, she puts the saw to your bicep and begins to work. The teeth bite into flesh, then muscle, and then you feel the horrifying, grinding vibration as it finds bone. The sound is a nightmare, disgusting, rancid tearing that fills the room. Your screams become choked, liquid gurgles as blood begins to fill your throat.

It seems to take an eternity. Your vision swims, black spots dancing in the edges. The world narrows to the grinding of the saw, the burning

agony in your shoulder, and Ryoshu's hot, smoky breathing. Then, with a final, wet rip of sinew, the limb comes free.

It falls to the tarp with a heavy, sodden thud. Your arm. Lying there, separate from you, the ruined hand still attached. From the stump of your shoulder, blood gushes in thick, pulsing fountains, synched to the frantic beat of your exposed heart.

Ryoshu looks from the severed arm, to the bloody space where it used to be, and then at the whole of her creation. Her face is an impassive mask, but her red eyes are blazing, drinking in the sight of you. Torn open, dismembered, dying on her floor.

"Ah," she says, a rare, soft exhalation of pure satisfaction. "N.I.C.E."

Your vision begins to tunnel, the edges of Ryoshu's l room blurring into a dark, swimming vignette. The roaring in your ears is the sound of your own life pouring out onto the tarp, a torrent from the gaping ruin of your shoulder and the great, yawning chasm in your chest. Each beat of your exposed heart feels weaker, a fluttery, failing muscle pushing against her encompassing fingers.

Ryoshu sets the saw aside with a quiet click of metal. The manic fire in her eyes has softened into a deep, profound satisfaction.

"Beautiful." she speaks. She kneels in the spreading pool of your blood, unbothered as the crimson fluid soaks into the knees of her pants. She runs a hand down your torso, fingers tracing the edges of the deep cuts, sending jolts of phantom pain through your fading nerves. She dips her hand into the well of your opened chest again, and you feel the painful, horrifying slide of her palm against your lung.

She pulls her hand back, dripping with your lifeblood. For a long moment, she just stares at it, at the vibrant color coating her glove. Then, slowly, she lifts her hand to her face and presses her index finger to her lips, tasting you. Her eyes close briefly.

She murmurs something that you can't hear anymore, appraising the flavor.

She lowers herself further still. Her body covering yours entirely, chest to chest, the soft curves of her breasts pressing against the raw, splintered edges of your ribs. A fresh wave of agony makes you twitch, but you lack the strength to struggle. Her weight is an anchoring you down to the floor. Your blood immediately begins to saturate her

shirt, the fabric turning sanguine and clinging to her skin, but she pays it no mind.

She leans her head down, her breath warm against your ear. All you can smell is smoke and blood.

“You’re still alive aren’t you?” she asks, her voice monotone. “Most don’t get to live to see the art they can become. But you have, and I suggest you relish it. Cause you and I will experience it O.A.O.”

As she speaks, her hand is inside you again, her fingers gently stroking your slowing heart. You can feel the weak, wet muscle beating against her palm. It is the most invasive, most intimate touch imaginable.

Everything is going dark now. The pain is a distant, dull thrumming. The sound of her voice is a muffled drone, the last anchor to a world you’re rapidly leaving. You can feel a final, reflexive tear slide from the corner of your eye, tracing a clean path through the blood on your cheeks.

Just as the last pinpoint of light is about to extinguish, her face appears above yours, framed by the encroaching darkness. She leans down, and her lips meet yours. The kiss is deep and firm. One you are incapable of reciprocating.

She pulls back slowly. Her red eyes, the last thing you see with any clarity. One more touch.

Her left hand clamps onto your jaw, forcing it open with painful strength. With her right, her fingers pinch your tongue, pulling it taut from your mouth. You see the glint of the knife, the one she started with, for one last, fleeting moment.

And then, nothing.

Chapter End Notes

Kill me

Chapter 3: Faust | Exposed Brain

Chapter Summary

> Faust gives the newest recruited sinner a DIY in house lobotomy free of charge

A sluggish thought swam through a thick, syrupy fog, the first ripple of consciousness in a stagnant pool of drug-induced sleep. It was a heavy, unwelcome, dragging with it the dull ache of a chemically bludgeoned mind. Before your eyes even opened, you were aware of the cold. A flat, unforgiving chill seeped into your back from the hard metal surface you were on. Then came the second awareness: the tight pressure around your wrists, your ankles, and a broad, tight strap across your chest.

Your eyelids fluttered, then peeled open with the sticky reluctance of glue. The light was too harsh, a single focused beam from a lamp angled directly down at you, making you squint. As your pupils fought to adjust, the shapes of the room slowly bled into focus.

This was Faust's room.

The fleeting sense of familiarity was instantly devoured by a tidal wave of ice-cold panic. This was her room, but it had been perverted. A tall metal stand stood beside you, holding a clear bag of fluid with a tube dangling from it. Next to it, on a wheeled tray, lay an array of instruments that glinted with clear sharpness. Scalpels, forceps, retractors, a marker, and even a drill.

You didn't want to know why any of that was there. You pulled, hard. The thick leather straps bit cruelly into your skin, refusing to give even a millimeter. You thrashed, your body arching against the restraints in a useless, frantic struggle. The metal table beneath you felt impossibly solid, probably built somehow into the bus's very frame.

"That is an inefficient expenditure of what little energy you already have."

The voice was soft, cutting through your panicked noises with the placid calm of still water. It came from the corner of the room, near her desk. You twisted your head, the angle awkward and straining your neck, and saw her. Faust stood with her back to you. She was

calmly, methodically, arranging another set of tools on a cloth, the faint clink of metal on metal in the otherwise quiet room.

“F-faust? What… what is this?” your voice came out as a questioning plea. “What’s going on?”

She didn’t turn around, but you saw her head tilt slightly, a gesture of mild consideration. “Faust has determined that any further struggling will only introduce unnecessary variables and prolong the procedure. It would be in your best interest, and the interest of the data’s integrity, to not move too much.”

“Procedure? What procedure?” You pulled again, a sob of pure terror catching in your throat. “Faust, please! Let me out of this!”

Finally, she turned. Her blue eyes were as calm and unreadable as ever, holding no malice, no anger, not even a flicker of excitement. There was only a placid, unnerving curiosity, the look of an academic about to dissect a particularly interesting specimen.

“You have already consented,” she stated simply. “This is a clinical trial to gather data on the direct neurological impact of Identity synchronization. You agreed to assist in Faust’s research. In fact you should feel proud, the results should prove invaluable for the continued operational success of Limbus Company.”

Your mind reeled, desperately scrabbling for the memory. You remembered a conversation a few days ago. She’d approached you, speaking of improving the efficiency of the Mephistopheles's engine, of understanding the strain on the Sinners. She had asked if you’d be willing to help her with some… cognitive tests. You’d agreed, of course. You trusted her. You thought it would be a few puzzles, maybe a memory game. Not… this.

“N-no! Not for this! I never agreed to be strapped to a fucking table!” You squirmed, the leather chafing your skin raw. “Let me go, Faust! This isn’t funny! It’s some kind of sick joke!”

The soft, measured click of her shoes on the floorboards announced her approach. She stopped beside the table, looking down at you. Her expression was one of mild disappointment, as though you were a student failing to grasp a simple concept.

“A jest implies an intent to amuse. Faust’s intent is to acquire knowledge,” she said, her voice a low murmur. “The two are mutually exclusive. This is not a joke.”

She reached over, her movements precise. You flinched as her hand came close, but she only picked up a small, pen-like device from the tray. She clicked it on, and a sharp point of light beamed out.

“Faust requires a baseline reading before we begin,” she said, her voice returning to monotone. Her cool fingers, gently but firmly grasped your chin, tilting your head to the side. She leaned in close, her face just inches from yours. “Look forward. Do not blink.”

“Please,” you whispered, tears finally welling up and blurring her impassive face. “Faust, I don’t—”

She ignored your plea as completely as if you hadn’t spoken. She brought the light to your eye, and you squeezed it shut instinctively.

“Your lack of cooperation is noted,” she sighed, a faint whisper of exasperation. “This process will be significantly more difficult if you resist at every step. Faust knows you are capable of greater logical composure than this.” Her free hand moved to your forehead, fingers pressing against your temple as she forced your eyelid open. The light was blinding. “Now, hold still.”

Turning to equip a pair of medical latex gloves, she went back to observing your distress. Her gloved fingers were cold as they pressed against the side of your neck, a stark contrast to the panicked heat flushing your skin. “Your heart rate is elevated. Understandable, but not ideal. Please attempt to regulate your breathing.”

“Faust, listen to me, you can’t do this,” you begged, your voice hoarse. “Whatever you think I agreed to, it wasn’t this. Please…”

“Pupillary response is symmetrical,” she murmured, ignoring you completely as she shone the bright penlight into your other eye. Her touch was firm, impersonal. She tested the reflexes in your arms and legs, tapping your knees with a small hammer, noting the involuntary kicks with a soft hum of approval. “Nervous system appears to be functioning within normal parameters.”

Fueled by a final, desperate surge of adrenaline, you gave one last violent thrash, straining every muscle in your body against the leather. The table legs scraped against the floor with a harsh shriek, and for a glorious, fleeting second, you felt one of the ankle straps give just a fraction.

Faust stopped. She straightened up, and the look on her face showed nothing but simple, pragmatic annoyance. It was the look one might

give a malfunctioning piece of equipment.

“Further non-compliance will only result in damage to your peripheral nerves,” she stated, her voice losing its feigned softness and taking on a clipped, commanding edge. “Understand that this is a direct result of your choices.” She moved with a purpose to the foot of the table. Grasping the buckle of the strap you’d loosened, she braced herself and pulled. The leather cinched with a sickening groan, impossibly tight, driving the metal buckle deep into your ankle. She moved to the other three restraints, ratcheting each one tighter and tighter until your limbs were utterly, painfully immobile, the circulation already beginning to protest with a tingling numbness.

You were pinned. A specimen on a slide.

Satisfied with your complete immobilization, she turned to her counter. She donned a thick, rubberized apron over her clothes and tied it snugly behind her back. Then, she unfolded a pale blue surgical mask and looped it over her ears, hiding her mouth and nose. All that was left visible were her eyes, now utterly devoid of any remaining humanity.

“Faust will now begin,” she announced to the room, to you, to some unseen observer.

She returned to your side, a black marker in her hand. You flinched as the cold, plastic tip touched your forehead. With meticulous care, she began to draw on you. Long, sweeping lines over your scalp, small crosses, dotted paths, and precise numerical measurements that meant nothing to you but clearly formed a gruesome map in her mind.

When she was done, she picked up a humming electric razor.The buzzing grew loud as she brought it to your hairline. You squeezed your eyes shut as she sheared away your hair, the vibrations rattling against your skull, the locks falling onto your face and the table in a pathetic, shorn mess.

Then she took up the scalpel. It caught the lamplight, a glint of deadly silver.

“Initial incision,” she narrated, her voice slightly muffled by the mask. “Subject is vocalizing distress. Significant pain response is to be expected.”

Her free hand pressed firmly against the side of your head, holding you in place as she brought the blade to one of the lines she had

drawn. You screamed, panicked and terrified, as the scalpel sliced into your skin. It hurt so bad you couldn't even describe it, searing, electric fire that parted your flesh with ease. You felt the blade scrape against the bone of your skull, a sensation so profoundly wrong it made you want to vomit. Hot, thick blood immediately began to well up, running down your scalp, into your ear, and past your temple in a warm, sticky river.

"Ggh..aeh… ahhh… stop… please, Fauss…, stop…" you sobbed, the words dissolving into incoherent whimpers.

"The galea aponeurotica is now exposed. Bleeding is moderate," she continued, her voice unwavering. You felt a series of sharp, pinching sensations as she applied metallic clips along the edges of the wound, the sound of them clicking shut lost beneath your own ragged gasps. Then came a new, grotesque sensation—a brutal, forceful pulling. She was peeling your scalp back, using retractors to stretch the flesh and muscle away from the bone. You could feel your own face being distorted by the tension, your skin pulled taut in a permanent, screaming grimace.

When she was finished, a large section of your skull was bare to the air. The pain was a roaring, all-consuming ocean.

"Cranium is exposed," she noted. "Now for the craniotomy."

She set aside the bloody instruments and picked up the drill. The high-pitched whine that filled the room was the sound of utter damnation. It started low and escalated into a piercing shriek as she pressed the trigger. You squeezed your eyes shut, every muscle in your body rigid with terror.

The moment the drill bit touched your skull, your entire world became a vibrating, screaming symphony of suffering. The sound was inside your head, a deafening roar that drowned out your own screams. The vibration rattled through your bones, down your spine, shaking your very teeth in their sockets. An acrid, foul stench filled the air—the smell of your own bone, burning. She worked with a steady hand, drilling a series of small holes along the line she'd marked, each one a fresh, vibrating explosion of torture.

"Subject is exhibiting signs of extreme duress, but remains conscious," she observed, pausing to wipe a smear of blood and bone dust from her apron. She then picked up what looked like a wire saw. After threading it through two of the holes, she began to pull it back and

forth. The grating, rasping sound was a nightmare, a dry, scraping noise that was practically every sense in your head. With a wet, sickening **crack** that echoed inside your skull, the section of bone came loose.

She put down the saw and, using a pair of forceps, carefully lifted the bone flap away. A rush of cool air where there should be nothing but warmth and protection sent a new, bizarre shock through your system. The pressure in your head changed, a horrifying release that made you feel dizzy and violated on a level you didn't know was possible.

There was a moment of silence, broken only by your choked, hitching breaths. Through the tears and blood blurring your vision, you saw Faust lean in closer.

"Faust has completed the initial procedure," she spoke, her voice having been unaffected by the atrocity she had just committed on you. "The dura mater is incised. The cerebral cortex is now visible. Pulsation is steady."

She reached for a new tray of instruments—long, thin probes and delicate forceps.

"I suggest you hold onto something to distract yourself as best you can manage."

You couldn't feel the probe itself.

That was the most insidious part of the horror. As Faust leaned over you, her focused eyes peering into the raw, open cavity of your skull, she lowered the tip of a long, silver needle. You braced for a new kind of pain, a deep, internal agony, but it never came. The brain itself had no nerve endings. There was only a faint, slick pressure, a gentle depression in the gelatinous, pulsing surface of your own mind.

And then the world dissolved into the smell of burning wires.

It was overwhelming, an acrid, chemical stench that filled your sinuses and coated the back of your throat. You gagged, the taste of ozone and hot plastic flooding your mouth.

"Stimulating the primary olfactory cortex," Faust's voice was a steady anchor in your sea of sensory chaos. She held a small digital recorder near her mask. "Report any perceived scents."

"B-Burning…" you choked out, the word thick with terror. "It smells

like… like something's on fire…"

"Noted." The probe lifted, and the phantom smell vanished as quickly as it had appeared, leaving you gasping in the blood and antiseptic scented air of the room. Before you could even process the relief, she touched another spot.

Your right hand, still pinned by the tightened strap, clenched into a fist so tight your knuckles turned white. It was not your action. You watched your own fingers curl and tighten with a will entirely separate from your own. You tried to fight it, to force your hand open, but it was like trying to argue with a stone.

"Motor response is strong," she observed, making a note on a small tablet beside the table. "Now, attempt to detail the sensation of the following feeling. Describe it as I apply pressure to this region of the frontal lobe."

"I… I can't…" you grunted, your entire focus on the mutiny of your own hand. "Make it stop! Faust, please, make it stop!"

She ignored your pleas, her focus absolute. "The subject is demonstrating difficulty accessing complex, identity-based memories while under direct motor stimulation. The cognitive load may be too high." She moved the probe again, to a spot deeper, more central.

This time, there was no smell, no movement. There was only feeling. A wave of pure, unadulterated terror crashed over you, so potent and so absolute it dwarfed everything you had felt before. It was not the fear of the scalpel or the drill; it was a primal, chemical dread, a certainty that you were about to die in the most horrible way imaginable, a horror that resonated in your very soul. A scream was ripped from your throat, raw and ragged, an animal sound of pure, manufactured panic. Tears and snot streamed from your face, mixing with the blood already smeared there.

"A spike in adrenal response. The amygdala is highly reactive," Faust's voice cut through your screaming. She sounded almost pleased. "Does this sensation correlate with any specific memory?"

You couldn't answer. You could only scream and sob as the probe remained, holding you in that state of perfect, artificial horror. Just when you thought your heart would explode, she withdrew it. The terror receded, leaving you a limp, shuddering, weeping wreck, the echoes of it still vibrating through your nerves.

A warm, thick wetness trickled from your nose. You felt it run over your upper lip, a hot, salty line. Through your blurred, tear-filled vision, you saw the dark crimson drip onto the white paper sheet covering your chest. A severe bloody nose, the pressure in your skull finally finding a new, grotesque outlet. You could taste the coppery tang as it seeped into your mouth.

“Minor nasal hemorrhaging,” Faust noted with detached interest. “Likely due to the spike in blood pressure.” She didn't bother to wipe it away. It was just another data point. She moved the probe once more.

Suddenly, your mind was filled with the memory of a sun-drenched dock, the taste of open air on your lips, the rough, familiar feel of a fishing net in calloused hands you didn't recognize. The face of a smiling, weather-beaten figure with kind eyes appeared before you, so vivid you felt you could reach out and touch her. A wave of deep, abiding love for this complete stranger washed through you.

“Who…?” you whispered, your voice broken.

“Vestigial memory fragment,” Faust explained, a clear note of excitement in her tone. “From the □□□□□□□□□□□□□ Identity. That is likely their spouse. The hippocampus is retaining emotional resonance even when the core personality is absent.”

She began to work faster, a maestro conducting a symphony of neurological chaos. She touched a point, and you involuntarily giggled, a hysterical, bubbly sound, even as tears of pain streamed down your face. She touched another, and your left leg kicked out violently against its strap. She stimulated two points at once, and you were flooded with so many feelings you couldn’t even recall what you were doing.

The dissonance was tearing you apart. You were a puppet, and she was pulling every string, severing the connection between thought and action, feeling and reality.

“Stop…” you begged, the word slurring as she grazed the broca's area, your own tongue feeling completely useless in your mouth. “P-pluh… fuh… stuh…”

“The subject's laughter appears incongruous with the concurrent physical distress and vocal pleas,” she dictated into her recorder, her voice a low, captivated hum. “This suggests a significant disconnect between the stimulated emotional response and the subject’s core

cognitive awareness of their situation." She leaned in closer, the glint in her eyes one of pure, unadulterated discovery.

"Faust will now proceed with the next step."

Chapter 4: Mostima | Patched Up

Chapter Summary

> Reader gets mulched by an anti personnel explosive on the field but thanks to Mostima's arts she's able to patch them up fast enough despite their wishes

The world was pain.

Pain was the air in your lungs, the fire in your veins, the screaming static that had replaced every other sense. You thrashed, a convulsive, useless twitching against the blasted earth, a movement that only sent fresh waves of torment crashing through you.

Pain was the only real thing left—a white-hot, screaming feedback loop that erased thought, memory, and everything but the screaming now. You tasted blood and the tough, treated leather of the knife sheath jammed between your teeth. The pressure against your molars was the only anchor in a storm that threatened to tear you apart, the only thing stopping you from swallowing your tongue or biting it clean in two.

A choked, wet groan ripped its way out of your throat, muffled by the sheath. Your body tried to arch, to flee from the pain, but nothing responded correctly. Your legs were dead, you tried to push yourself up, to move, to do *anything*, but your legs wouldn't obey. You couldn't even feel them, not really.

There was just a vast, roaring emptiness below your waist, a disconnected sense of weight and wetness. Your pants were gone, reduced to blood-soaked tatters clinging to mangled flesh. Thick, hasty field bandages were wrapped around your thighs, but they were already stained a deep, horrifying crimson, doing nothing to hide the jagged black shards of metal embedded in the meat of your legs like grotesque thorns. Blood, thick and syrupy, pooled beneath you, plastering the dirt and gravel to your skin.

Your gaze drifted higher, tracing the path of destruction. One of your arms was a ruin of torn muscle and splintered bone, wrapped just as crudely. Your torso was the epicenter of the nightmare. Your uniform and vest had been blasted open, and from your ribs down to your navel, you were a gaping wound. A chaotic lattice of bandages was stretched taut across the chasm, pressing down, holding you together.

But even through the thick gauze, you could see the dark, glistening shapes of your own organs, slick with blood and viscera, pulsing weakly with the frantic beat of your heart.

"Hey, hey... easy now. Just a little more."

Mostima's voice. It cut through the haze, calm and infuriatingly gentle. A nice, cool blue in a universe of violent red. Her hands were on you, bloodied all the way up to the elbow, pressing a firm pressure on your stomach that was both a source of extreme pain and probably the only thing that felt like it was holding you together.

You tried to writhe away, a pathetic, spastic jerk of your upper body. A fresh wave of nausea and blinding pain exploded from your torso, and you gagged on the knife sheath. Your good eye—the other was a black, sticky void of uselessness—flickered open, trying to focus on her.

She was leaning over you, her usual laid-back expression pulled just a little tighter at the corners of her lips. Her blue hair fell around her face, and her dimmed halo seemed to absorb the light. She was holding a long, thick roll of bandages in one hand and pressing down on a wad of gauze with the other, right over the gaping wound that had turned your abdomen into a trench.

"Just a few nasty scrapes," she murmured, her cyan-blue eyes meeting yours. They held no panic. No fear. Just a placid, unnerving focus. "Got you all stirred up, huh? Don't you worry. We'll have you patched up and right as rain in no time."

The lie was so blatant, so utterly absurd, that a hysterical noise that might have been a laugh or a sob bubbled in your chest. Right as rain? You could feel the heavy coils of your own intestines shifting against the inside of the bandages she was pressing into you. It smelled like you were practically a corpse already.

"Stay with me, okay? Biting on that is good. Keep doing that," she instructed, her voice dropping into that smooth, persuasive tone she used when trying to charm her way out of a ticket or into a restricted area. She shifted her weight, and you saw what she was doing. With a pair of forceps she'd pulled from a medkit, she was carefully, methodically pulling a jagged shard of metal from your thigh.

Your body convulsed. A scream shot from you, strangled by the leather in your mouth. Your vision swam with black spots, the edges closing in.

"Shhh, shhh, I know. It stings a bit," she cooed, as if she were talking to a child who'd scraped their knee. She dropped the bloody piece of metal to the side with a soft tink and immediately pressed a fresh gauze pad into the new, gushing wound. "See? One less thing to worry about. You're doing great. Just a few more of these to go."

You squeezed your eye shut, tears of pure agony leaking from the corner. You hated her. God, you fucking hated her more in that moment than you ever had during the lonely months of waiting, during the empty apologies, during the casual dismissals of your feelings. Her lies were nothing but awful, rotting poison, and right now, you didn’t even have the ability to close your mouth.

"It's... bad," you managed to force out, the words thick and slurred around the sheath. "M'stima... it's so bad."

"Nah," she said instantly, her voice unwavering. She started wrapping a fresh bandage around your thigh, her movements sure. "Looks worse than it is. It's mostly just a lot of blood. You know how these things are." She paused her wrapping to gently brush a strand of sweat-soaked hair from your forehead with the back of her bloody glove, leaving a faint crimson smear on your skin. “Promise.”

She went back to work on your torso, carefully peeling back a corner of the saturated bandage. You couldn't stop the shuddering gasp that escaped you at the sight. It was a cavern of raw meat, glistening fat, and deeper, darker shapes that pulsed weakly. A loop of something pale and glistening had escaped and was resting against your torn skin.

Before you could scream, she was there, gently but firmly tucking it back inside with the sterile tip of her forceps and slapping a new, thick pad over the wound.

"Whoops. Keep that in there," she said, her tone as casual. "See? No problem. Just gotta be tidy about it. Now, hold as still as you can. This next part is the tricky bit."

Her hands moved with a purpose that terrified you. You could feel a strange pulling and shifting deep within you, followed by a pain so profound, so elemental, it felt like your very soul was being flayed. You thrashed, your one good arm flailing weakly, trying to push her away, to make it stop.

"Almost there," she whispered, her voice doing nothing to appease the roaring inferno of your senses. "Just a little longer. I've got you."

The sheathed knife had fell from your mouth and lay beside your head in the dirt. She was holding a large, curved suture needle, pinching the edges of a particularly deep gash on your ribs together and pushing the needle through with a calm motion. You felt the sharp prick, the drag of the thread through your flesh, and the sickening, tight pull as she cinched the stitch.

"Please," you rasped, your voice a dry and cracking. Your throat felt shredded. "Mostima... please... just kill me."

She didn't even look up from her work. She simply snipped the thread with a small pair of shears and started on the next stitch. "Don't be silly," she said, her voice a low murmur. "We're making progress here. It would be a shame to waste it."

The casual dismissal just made it even worse. A desperate, primal energy surged through you, overriding the pain for a split second. With your one good arm, you clawed at your own stomach, fingers scrabbling for the edge of the thick, blood-soaked bandage pad. If she wouldn't end it, you would. You would rip yourself open, pull yourself apart—

Your fingers had barely brushed the sticky edge of the tape when her hand shot out and clamped around your wrist. Her speed was unnatural, her grip gentle but absolutely immovable. It was like being stopped by a steel bar.

"Careful," she chided softly, not a hint of anger in her tone. "You'll pull your stitches."

"Let me go!" you shrieked, the sound thin and pathetic. You tugged, but it was useless. You were a mannequin pulling at its strings. "Let me die! I'm begging you, just stop! Let me die!"

"And what would Emperor say? Penguin Logistics has a terrible track record with employee retention as it is," she quipped, her eyes finally flicking up to meet yours. They were completely serene. There was no pity, no horror, no shared anguish. There was nothing. Just the calm, blue stillness of a frozen lake. "Besides, you're not dying. I've decided you're not. So, you're not."

She gave your wrist a little squeeze before releasing it, confident you wouldn't—couldn't—try again. She was right. The brief surge of adrenaline was gone, leaving you shaking and boneless, the pain rushing back in to reclaim its throne. Tears of rage and despair streamed from your eye, carving clean paths through the grime and

blood on your face.

"I hate you," you sobbed, the words thick with phlegm and misery. "I fucking hate you."

"I know," she said, and her lack of reaction was more painful than any wound. She went back to her stitching, her movements slow and precise. Each puncture of the needle was a fresh lightning strike of pain. You could feel the thread pulling your mangled tissues together. "You can hate me all you want later. Right now, I need you to breathe. In and out. Panicking raises your heart rate, and frankly, you can't afford to be losing blood any faster than you already are."

She finished the line of crude, black stitches and covered it with a fresh bandage, pressing it down firmly. Her hands moved to your leg, probing a deep, crater-like wound in your thigh. You cried out as her fingers brushed something hard and sharp lodged deep inside.

"Ah, there's another one," she noted, her voice full of mild clinical interest. "This one's deep. Probably right up against the bone."

"No... no, no, please, just leave it..." you begged, thrashing your head from side to side. "Just let me bleed. Please I—"

"Nope," she stated simply, picking up the forceps again. "It'll get infected, and then you'll get sepsis. That's a much worse way to go. Trust me."

She didn't wait for your consent. She pushed the tips of the forceps deep into the wound. The pain was beyond comprehension. It wasn't sharp anymore. It was a grinding, crushing violation as the metal scraped against the raw surface of your femur. You screamed, a long, ragged, open-throated sound of pure animal suffering. You could feel her digging, twisting, searching for purchase on the shard of shrapnel buried in your leg.

"Almost... got it..." she grunted, the first sign of any effort from her.

Your vision went kaleidoscopic. The world fractured into shards of light and swimming darkness. You could hear a wet, tearing sound, feel a hideous, deep pluck as she finally pulled the object free. She held it up for a moment—a twisted, three-inch piece of scorched metal casing, dripping with your blood and bits of tissue—before tossing it aside.

The wave of relief from the object's absence was immediately

swallowed by the fresh, volcanic eruption of pain from the violated wound. She was already packing it with gauze, her bloody fingers pushing the material deep into the hole in your leg.

You were weeping uncontrollably now, your body shuddering with violent, racking sobs that sent jolts of agony through your torn abdomen. She just continued her work, pulling things out, stitching things up, wrapping you in layer after layer of white linen that immediately bloomed with red. And as she worked, you could hear her, impossibly, humming a soft, wandering tune under her breath.

End Notes

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